

**Right of Reply delivered by Ambassador Adam Scheinman at  
the NPT Preparatory Committee  
Vienna, Austria  
August 3, 2023**

Colleagues,

I take the floor to respond to statements made by one delegation.

I don't need to recapitulate the end-game of last year's Review Conference, but I think all here recall that Russia alone blocked agreement over language that was hardly extraneous to the treaty, questioning Ukraine's sovereign responsibility for its own nuclear facilities, including ZNPP.

Regarding Russia's comment on the Zaporizhzhya Nuclear Power Plant: The plant was perfectly safe and secure before Russia chose to further invade Ukraine and seize its nuclear facilities. Its actions directly undercut Ukraine's ability to maintain its own peaceful nuclear energy program—a right enshrined in the NPT. A right I have heard so many here defend.

I am confident that all here also understand that Russia, through its further invasion of Ukraine, created the crisis it now claims to be a victim of.

So, let's continue to look at the facts.

Of course, it was President Putin, not President Biden, who purported to suspend New START, a decision we deeply regret.

Russia's accusations of U.S. noncompliance are simply a baseless attempt to distract from Russia's own actions.

Contrary to longstanding Russian assertions, the United States was in full compliance with the New START Treaty at the time of Russia's invalid suspension of its obligations under the treaty, and we have since adopted lawful,

proportionate, and reversible countermeasures to persuade Russia to return to compliance with New START and to deny it the benefits of violating the treaty. The United States also remains in full compliance with the treaty's numerical limits, as it has been since the limits took effect in 2018.

Despite Russia's decision, the United States continues to prioritize transparency, predictability, and stability in the nuclear arms arena. That is why the United States voluntarily released aggregate data on U.S. strategic offensive arms under the New START Treaty on May 15.

If Russia has concerns about the implementation of the treaty, it can bring those concerns to the Bilateral Consultative Commission, established under the treaty, something that Russia refused to do.

Next, on the statements by Russia and others regarding NATO nuclear burden sharing.

At the risk of restating what is well known, NATO's nuclear burden-sharing arrangements predate and have always been fully consistent with the NPT.

I wish to reiterate as plainly as possible, that concerning such arrangements, the United States maintains full custody and control over their use. All of them. This was the basis of Articles I and II of the treaty. And this was the treaty the Soviet Union signed in 1968, when it was silent on this issue. It was silent again at the 1975 Review Conference. And in 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1995, when the treaty was extended indefinitely. And silence again in 2000, 2005, and 2010. Russia only objected in 2015, a year after its seizure of Crimea.

This is probably not a coincidence.

Russia may say silence is not consent, but it is certainly acknowledgement of established treaty practice.

In addition, yesterday, Russia claimed that it has been falsely accused of “aggressive nuclear rhetoric.” My Russian colleague asserted that “Russia has threatened no one.”

I’ll just leave it to all of you to judge whether that is true. But I believe that the world has been watching, the world has been listening, including everyone in this room.

Its behavior has been reckless, matched by its irresponsible decision to station nuclear weapons in Belarus.

Thank you.